

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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ASST. AUDITOR-CONTROLLERS

ROBERT A. DAVIS JOHN NAIMO JUDI E. THOMAS

May 21, 2009

TO:

Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman

Supervisor Gloria Molina

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich J. Waterle

FROM:

Wendy L. Watanabe

Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT:

AMERICA CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW - A

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER

We have completed a contract compliance review of America Care Foster Family Agency (America Care or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with America Care, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

America Care is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 37 certified foster homes in which 143 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. America Care is located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays America Care a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, America Care receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 Board of Supervisors May 21, 2009 Page 2

and \$790 per month, per child. DCFS paid America Care approximately \$1.4 million during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of our review was to determine whether America Care was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed America Care staff. We also visited 11 certified foster homes and interviewed several children and foster parents.

Results of Review

The foster homes we visited were well maintained. The foster parents stated that the services they received from America Care generally met their expectations, and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, the Agency staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required. However, America Care did not always comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- Four of the 19 Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) did not contain goals that were specific, measurable and attainable and did not indicate the reason the child was in placement.
- Seventeen of the 19 NSPs reviewed did not contain approvals by the children's DCFS social worker, as required.
- Three of the four children taking psychotropic medications did not have monthly evaluations by their prescribing physicians documented in their case files.
- None of the 11 termination reports reviewed was dated. As a result, we could not determine whether the reports were submitted to the children's DCFS social worker timely.
- One of the 13 foster parent files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency conducted a child abuse index clearance for an adult that permanently resided in the foster home. Prior to the conclusion of our review, America Care obtained the criminal clearance for the adult.
- Three of the 13 foster parent files reviewed did not contain documentation of a current driver's license or automobile insurance. Prior to the conclusion of our review, America Care provided the required documentation.

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 Two of America Care's social workers carried more cases than allowed by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The two social workers carried an average caseload of 16 during the review period. In addition, the Agency's supervising social worker carried five more cases than allowed.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with America Care on February 26, 2009. In their attached response, America Care indicates agreement with our findings and the actions they have taken to implement the recommendations. DCFS will follow up with the Agency to ensure the recommendations are implemented.

We thank America Care for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:DC:AA

Attachment

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ramzy Fakhoury, President, Board of Directors, America Care FFA
Alicia Gelisi-Ciriani, Executive Director, America Care FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM AMERICA CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether America Care Foster Family Agency (America Care or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited 11 of the 37 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that America Care billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in December 2007 and January 2008, and interviewed 13 foster parents, and all 19 children placed in the 11 homes. We also reviewed the case files for 11 foster parents and 19 children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

All 11 homes we visited were well maintained. The foster parents stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations, and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. However, America Care needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and case files contain all the required information. We specifically noted the following:

Needs and Services Plans

- Four (21%) of the 19 NSPs did not contain goals that were specific, measurable and attainable and did not indicate the reason the child was in placement.
- Seventeen (89%) of the 19 NSPs reviewed did not contain approvals by the children's DCFS social worker, as required. Although seven of the 19 NSPs were sent to the DCFS social worker for approval, America Care did not follow up with the DCFS social workers when the approvals were not obtained.

Our prior review also noted that America Care did not always ensure that NSPs contained all the required information and that DCFS social workers approved the NSPs.

Medical Services and Termination Reports

• Three of the four (75%) children taking psychotropic medications did not have monthly evaluations by their prescribing physicians documented in their case files.

None of the 11 termination reports was dated. As a result, we could not determine
whether the reports were submitted to the children's DCFS social worker timely.

Foster Parent Certification and Home Visitation

- One (8%) of the 13 foster parent files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency conducted child abuse index clearance for an adult that permanently resided in the foster home. Prior to the conclusion of our review, America Care obtained the criminal clearance for the adult.
- One (8%) of the 13 foster parent files reviewed did not contain documentation of the tuberculosis screening for the foster parent. Prior to the conclusion of our review, America Care provided the results of the screening.
- Three (23%) of the 13 foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain documentation of a current driver's license or automobile insurance. Prior to the conclusion of our review, America Care provided the required documentation.
- One (9%) of eleven foster homes did not conduct a disaster drill every six months.

Recommendations

America Care management ensure:

- 1. NSPs contain all the required information including goals that are specific, measurable and attainable and indicate the reason the child is in placement.
- 2. The DCFS social worker approves NSPs.
- 3. Children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by their prescribing physician.
- 4. Termination reports are submitted to the DCFS social worker within the required timeframes.
- 5. Child abuse index clearances are conducted for all adults permanently residing in foster homes.
- 6. Foster parents receive all the required pre-certification health examinations prior to certification.
- 7. Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including documentation of a current driver's license and automobile insurance.

8. Foster parents conduct disaster drills every six months.

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that America Care billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed 19 children placed in 11 America Care certified foster homes and 13 foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster children interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents, and the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. All of the foster parents indicated that they appreciated the prompt and helpful responses they received from the Agency.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether America Care social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed America Care's administrator and supervising social worker and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Two of America Care's social workers carried more cases than allowed by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The two social workers carried an average caseload of 16 children during the review period. In addition, the Agency's supervising social worker carried five more cases than allowed.

Recommendations

America Care management:

- 9. Ensure that social workers do not carry more cases than allowed by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.
- 10. Hire additional staff if the number of cases exceeds the maximum number allowed.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether America Care staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed America Care's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

America Care's supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, America Care conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Objective

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the Auditor-Controller's prior monitoring review.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring reviews were implemented. The report was issued on August 16, 2006.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained seven outstanding recommendations. America Care fully implemented five of the recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations 1, 2 and 3 contained in this report were also noted during the prior monitoring review.

Recommendation

11. America Care management implement the two outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring report.

America Care Foster Family Agency



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03/02/2009

To:

Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair

Supervisor Gloria Molina

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From:

America Care Foster Family

Alicia J. Gelsi-Ciriani Executive Director

Subject:

AMERICA CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CORRECTIVE PLAN OF ACTION

03/2008 AUDITOR-CONTROLLER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear Supervisors:

America Care Foster Family Agency would like to thank the Auditor-Controller's office for the comprehensive review conducted in 03/2008. America Care FFA is committed to providing the best possible services to our children and families, thus we would like to express our genuine gratitude for the constructive feedback we received from the Auditor, Ms. Maricela Morfin and her Supervisor, Wendy Watanabe. We appreciate the level of professionalism and respect our agency experienced throughout the process and we look forward to a continued successful partnership with the County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services.

The following are Corrective Plan of Actions to address the Auditor's recommendations:

 Ensure that NSPs contain all the required information including goals that are specific, measurable, and attainable, and indicate the reason the child was in placement.

As of 11/2008, America Care FFA has implemented LA County's NSP reports. All reports include the reason the child was in placement since there is a designated section on the new LA County's NSP.

A meeting was held with all America Care FFA Social Workers where the criteria of the NSP's goals were reviewed. All Social Workers were given examples of appropriate goals that are specific, measurable, and attainable. Supervisors will then make certain that when reviewing all NSPs, the goals meet the above criteria.

It is important to note that America Care interpreted the specific instructions provided at the County Wide NSP training to the best of our understanding given the examples that were provided by the County. However, now that the goal criteria were clarified by Ms. Morfin, America Care will abide by the requirements.

2.) Ensure that NSPs are approved by the children's DCFS social worker

America Care will abide by the County's recommendation of making three attempts to obtain the signature of the child's DCFS social worker. For the 1st attempt, each NSP will be faxed to the CSW and the fax confirmation sheet will be attached to report. The 2nd attempt will be a follow up phone call to the DCFS social worker, and the 3rd attempt will be a call to the DCFS supervising social worker. These attempts will be documented on the NSP signature page.

 Ensure that children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by their prescribing physicians.

America Care Social Worker will document the monthly medical visits the child has with their prescribing physicians. America Care will train all Foster Parents to take the DCFS 561c form to the child's monthly medication management visits. If FP is unable to receive a completed signed DCFS 561 c form, FFA Social Worker will request the signed DCFS 561 c form via fax to the office of the prescribing physician. FFA Social Worker will request the assistance of the DCFS social worker if unable to receive the completed DCFS 561 c form from the physician's office.

Additionally, Out of Home Care and Community Care Licensing will be informed if difficulties arise due to the lack of cooperation from physicians to comply with DCFS regulations, which frequently occur.

 Termination reports are submitted to the DCFS Social Workers within the timeframes specified in the County Contract.

America Care has assigned the responsibility of faxing all terminated reports to internal support staff so as to ensure that reports are being faxed to the DCFS Social Workers within 30 days. It is now a requirement that fax confirmations be attached to the termination reports, so as to prove that termination reports were being submitted to the DCFS Social Workers. America Care understands that due to the lack of proof to indicate that termination reports were sent out, America Care was found to be non-compliant with County Contract. However, we would like to respectfully inform the Supervisors that America Care was indeed submitting all termination reports to the appropriate County Social Workers and will now ensure that fax confirmations are attached to all termination reports so as to prove compliance with County Contract.

Ensure that child abuse index clearances are conducted for all adults that permanently reside in the foster home.

All America Care Social Workers are to complete Monthly Reports/Monthly Inspections for their certified homes. On this report, it is required that Social Workers notate any visitors in the home and their length of stay. If these visitors intend to reside in the home for 30+ days, they will be required to Live Scan. All permanent residents in the certified homes will be notated as Adults in the Home, and all information regarding their clearances are required to be on file.

It is important for America Care to inform the interested parties that the reason as to why this recommendation came about was due to a confusion of the residence of the Certified Foster Mother's Fiancée. Letters of affidavit confirming the current living situation were provided to the Auditor, and America Care is able to provide mail and bills that were sent to the primary residence of the individual in question. America Care is diligent in complying with the Adult in the Home requirements.

Ensure that Foster Parents receive and have documented pre-certification health examination prior to certification.

There is now a Certification Supervisor that audits all pre-certified foster parent files to ensure that all required documents are submitted prior to certification.

7.) Ensure that Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including documentation of current driver's license and automobile insurances.

Foster Parent Coordinator is responsible for informing America Care Supervisors and Social Workers of all upcoming expired or missing documents on a bi-weekly basis via spreadsheet emails and hard copy. Additionally, Foster Parent Coordinator is responsible for mailing out notices to Foster Parents of all upcoming expired or missing documents on a monthly basis. Additionally, Certified Foster Homes will be put on administrative hold until all necessary documents are submitted.

8.) Ensure that all foster parents conduct disaster drills every six months.

Every six months and at the time of a new placement, FCSWs are to simulate disaster drills and ensure that all minors along with their Foster Parents be present while the disaster drills are conducted. As part of the disaster drill, FCSWs are to ensure that minors know their address and phone numbers in case of emergency. Additionally, FCSWs are to document the disaster drills on the Monthly Reports/Monthly Inspections for their certified homes.

Ensure that social workers do not carry more than the number of cases allowed by Title 22 regulations.

America Care Supervisors are to review social worker's caseloads on a bi-weekly basis to ensure that no social worker carries over 15 cases.

 Hire additional staff if the number of cases exceeds the maximum allowed by CDSS and Title 22 regulations.

America Care Foster Family Agency has complied with the above recommendations as evident by the LIC 500, which indicates that new Foster Care Social Workers have been hired.

 America Care management to implement the two outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring report.

Please refer to CAPs notated in the #1 and #3 recommendations above. America Care has diligently implemented the Corrective Action Plans addressing these two outstanding recommendations.

9/01

Alicia J/ Gelsi-Ciriani Executive Director